

First Senior US Official to Meet with Egyptian President in Months, Follows Passage of Funding Bill Containing Conditions on US Aid



Cairo Egypt--Rep. Steve Israel, (D-NY) a Member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations, met today with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Sharm el Sheik. Today's meeting followed several days of meetings Rep. Israel conducted with Senior Egyptian Officials and American troops in Sinai.

Israel was the first senior U.S. official to meet with Mubarak since Congress passed legislation conditioning portions of U.S. aid to Cairo pending progress on several fronts. The meeting was 3-hours long and included a working lunch. The United States Ambassador to Egypt was present throughout the meeting.

Rep. Israel said:

There is no question that I came to Egypt during a tense and important time in relations with the U.S.

My meeting with President Mubarak covered many issues, including American concerns about the smuggling of weapons and other contraband through underground tunnels from Egyptian territory into Gaza.

I thanked him for his leadership in allowing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to examine the tunnels in November 2007. I also thanked him for his commitment to dedicate \$23 million of the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) funding the United States provides Egypt for the purchase and use of highly technical tunnel detection equipment.

Egypt's partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers presents an important opportunity for Egypt to use their forces, our trainers, and new equipment to discover and destroy these tunnels.

It is my hope that enough progress will be made so that this issue can be taken off the table in future Congressional appropriations bills. I also emphasized that it is time to move beyond legislative language and make real progress together.

The debate over funding conditions is essentially over. Egypt has taken important steps in recent months since the prospect of conditioning language was circulated. I hope we can move ahead so that Egypt can continue to build on progress on the tunnels, as well as the broader issues of regional peace, security and stability.